

UPDATE

Mammograms: Your Best Defense

One in eight U.S. women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. Despite the recent controversy, the U.S. government confirms that mammography, which can find tumors two years before they can be felt, is currently the best tool for early detection. Although the idea of cancer can frighten people, getting a mammogram is nothing to fear.

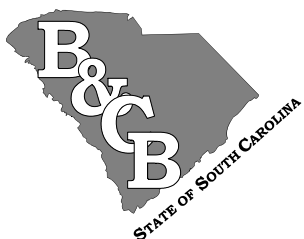
Mammography screening is a safe, low-dose X-ray technique that detects 85 to 90 percent of breast cancers. The remaining 10 to 15 percent of breast cancers do not show up on mammograms, so breast self-exams and clinical exams by a physician are also critical. With an early diagnosis, the five-year survival rate for breast cancer is now over 90 percent.

The mammogram procedure is fast and simple. First, you are taken into a private booth to undress from the waist up and given a gown to put on. Next, you step up to the X-ray machine and slip the gown off one side. The technician positions you, placing one breast between two plastic plates. Then the technician takes a picture of the breast, repositions you and takes a second picture. Two pictures are taken of each breast, one from the side and one from above.

It is important to remember that each facility handles the results differently. Some will provide results immediately, while others will send them to your doctor, who should mail you a card. If you don't receive your results when expected, you should call to inquire. Never assume that since you haven't heard anything concerning your test results that things are okay. It is always important to double check and follow-up test results especially if you have not received any information.

Because of the importance of early breast cancer detection, Prevention Partners encourages women to perform self-exams on a monthly basis and to receive a mammogram as prescribed by your physician. To get in the habit of performing breast self-exams we encourage you to perform the self-exams at the same time every month using the same pattern in the same position. If you usually perform your breast self-exam in the shower using up and down motions, it is important to use that technique that you have become accustomed to, so that you are familiar with how your breast feels and can detect abnormal lumps that are not usually present. Remember that your best defense against breast cancer is mammograms and breast self-examinations.

Source: The American Institute for Cancer Research



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